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ABSTRACT

A program created to help mentally retarded adults move from a state facility to an independent living situation in Jackson, Mississippi, is described. The three stages of the program are outlined as follows: (1) new clients are housed in a cluster unit of apartments close to staff housing, during which time they are assessed according to the "Community Living Skills Analysis" checklist; (2) pairs of clients who have mastered most of the necessary living skills are transferred to separate apartments and, with some supervision and training, live independently; (3) clients with proven ability to solve everyday problems remain in their apartments but are terminated from the program. For each stage of the transition, criteria, training goals, and expectations are outlined. Follow-up and emergency services provided by the sponsoring hospital to clients who have achieved independent status are described. (LP)

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A THREE PHASE APPROACH TO INDEPENDENT APARTMENT LIVING FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED ADULTS WESTWICK SUPERVISED APARTMENT PROGRAM

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Description

The Westwick Supervised Apartment Program serves developmentally disabled adults from the central portion of Mississippi. The program is located in a 200 unit HUD subsidized project in a residential area of Jackson convenient to public transportation and shopping facilities. The program is administered by Hudspeth Retardation Center, a state facility for the mentally retarded, assisted by an Advisory Board made up largely of members of the local chapter of the Association for Retarded Citizens. Funding sources include Developmental Disability federal monies, state funding, ARC contributions and client participation. Program capacity is sixteen (16) clients with three full-time and two relief coordinators.

At the time of admission, clients move into the Cluster Unit or initial phase of the program which includes five two bedroom apartments located near the apartments of the full-time staff. Two or three clients live in each apartment. Training needs are assessed using the Community Living Skills Analysis, a checklist of daily living skills. Clients admitted to the program usually can perform approximately 75% of the skills on Level II of the assessment. Habilitation goals are determined and training is given on an individual or small group basis. Training for clients in the Cluster Unit usually centers around areas such as money management, job responsibility, home maintenance, shopping, meal planning, cooking, using public transportation, and utilizing community resources. All clients work either at an adult activity center,

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sheltered workshop or in competitive employment. Each pays a share of the rent, utilities and groceries. Although clients learn to use the city buses, they also utilize the program van.

The second phase of the program, Shadow Supervision, was initiated several years ago when the Advisory Board recognized the need for a more independent living situation for several clients participating in the program. These clients had made substantial progress but were not quite ready for totally independent living. The purpose of the Shadow Supervision phase was to bridge the gap between supervised apartment living and independence to make this transition easier.

Clients are selected for Shadow Supervision when they have mastered Level II, Level III and approximately 75% of the Level IV skills on the assessment used by the program. Shadow clients, usually two at a time, move from the Cluster Unit to their own apartments in another part of the complex. These clients must furnish their new apartment and pay both utility and apartment deposits. Clients recommended for Shadow Supervision generally must have a minimum of $500 in their savings accounts to offset expenses incurred. The staff members continue to work with clients in Shadow Supervision on the remainder of the skills on Level IV of the checklist and on improving any other weak areas to help prepare them for independent living. Staff time, however, is much more limited with Shadow Supervision clients as these clients no longer need the more intense training and supervision given to clients living in the Cluster Unit. Shadow clients are encouraged to be as resourceful as possible in handling their day to day responsibilities. They are expected to find transportation other than the program van when public transportation is not available, i.e. friends, carpools, etc. They are responsible for banking independently, doing their own shopping, making their own appointments and handling any other business. Staff members assist only to the degree needed.

When clients in Shadow Supervision have accomplished all goals set by the habilitation team and have demonstrated the ability to solve most everyday problems independently, they are then terminated from the program. Since the clients have already obtained their own apartment, another move is not necessary. Clients achieving Independent Status are then referred for Case Management services provided by the Community Services Department at Hudspeth Center. The case manager visits the clients living independently on a periodic basis. Clients are also assured that staff members from the Westwick program are available to them in an emergency, if the case manager cannot be contacted.

Recently, a client who had spent more than thirty years in an institution, successfully completed all phases of the Westwick Program and was honored by being named one of the two Handicapped Persons of the Year by the Governor of Mississippi. She was further honored by a reception in the Governor's Mansion.

Since the initiation of the Shadow Supervision Phase, two clients from the Westwick Program have moved to Independent Status and three are currently living in Shadow Supervision. Presently, thirteen clients are being served in the Cluster Unit.

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